

ISA Child Safe Policy and Procedure

1) Statement of Commitment

The Independent Sporting Association (ISA), its Member Schools, and the ISA Board of Directors recognise the important role that Children and Young People play within our community and the special care and attention that they need to feel safe. ISA will have a zero-tolerance approach to any form of child abuse, neglect, or exploitation. We are committed to upholding the rights of all Children and Young People to feel safe and be safe when participating in our sporting programs and activities.

Delivering a child safe environment across ISA is achieved through collaboration with our Member Schools, Children and Young People, their parents and guardians, and the broader sporting community — all working together to ensure that every participant experience sport free from harm, discrimination, and abuse.

Our Commitment to Children and Young People

The ISA and its Member Schools are committed to:

- a. Providing safe, inclusive, and supportive physical and online environments for all Children and Young People, including by:
 - i. Establishing culturally safe spaces that respect and value the diverse identities and experiences of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people; and
 - ii. Giving particular attention to the needs of vulnerable children, children with disability, children from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, and those identifying as LGBTQIA+.
- b. Ensuring that the experiences of Children and Young People in ISA sport are free from any form of prohibited conduct, including child abuse, grooming, bullying, or exploitation.
- c. Requiring all ISA staff, officials, and volunteers to act according to the ISA Code of Conduct, complete appropriate child safeguarding training, and understand their responsibilities to act in the best interests of Children and Young People.
- d. Empowering Children and Young People to speak up and respond to behaviour that is unsafe, inappropriate, or concerning.
- e. Ensuring clear communication channels so that everyone involved in ISA activities knows how to raise a concern, and that every report is taken seriously and acted on appropriately.
- f. Maintaining a transparent and consistent reporting framework that enables Children and Young People, families, and others to report any safety or wellbeing concern without fear or hesitation.
- g. Providing access to support services for any Child or Young Person and their families affected by prohibited conduct, including child abuse or grooming.

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The Independent Sporting Association is deeply committed to ensuring that all Children and Young People experience safe, healthy, and positive sporting environments. Together, with our Member Schools and partners, ISA will continue to build a culture of trust, accountability, and safety — where every child is valued, respected, and protected.

2) Suitability and Support of Staff

The ISA requires its Staff and ISA Officials to be suitable, supported, and aware of their child safety responsibilities.

- **2.1 Working With Children Check (WWCC):** All Participating Staff, including coaches, managers, and officials, must hold a current Working With Children Check (WWCC) Clearance verified through their respective member school or, for direct ISA employees, verified by the ISA. The WWCC clearance number and expiry date must be provided to the ISA.
- **2.2 Recruitment & Screening:** For any personnel directly employed by the ISA, recruitment processes will explicitly emphasise child safety, and thorough screening, induction, and reference checks will be completed prior to commencement.
- **2.3 Induction and Supervision:** Member schools are responsible for the induction, training, and ongoing supervision of their staff. ISA management will ensure that all staff overseeing ISA representative teams receive a specific ISA Child Safe induction covering boundaries, supervision, and reporting obligations.
- **2.4 Supervision Ratios and Gender Balance:**
 - **Adequate Supervision:** Participating ISA Staff / Officials must always provide competent and active supervision of students whilst in their duty of care, including during transport, events, and waiting for collection.
 - **Team Leadership:** Representative teams must have a coach and a manager. At least one of these positions must be held by a staff member of the same gender as the team of players. Both genders should be represented for mixed teams (e.g., athletics, swimming, cross-country).

3) Protecting Physical and Online Environments

The physical and online environments associated with ISA activities are designed to minimise opportunities for abuse to occur.

- **3.1 Rule of Two / Never Alone:** ISA Staff and Officials must never be alone in an enclosed space with an individual student, such as storerooms, vehicles, maintenance sheds, or change rooms. Any necessary one-on-one interaction must be conducted in an open space, in full view of others.
- **3.2 Appropriate Physical Contact:**
 - Physical contact for coaching demonstration or duty of care (e.g., first aid) must be appropriate, reasonable, and not excessive.

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- Permission must be sought from the student before any contact. Staff must be sensitive to reluctance or discomfort.
- Coaching demonstration contact should be performed in the presence of other students where possible.
- For medical assessment/treatment, explicit verbal consent must be gained from the student, and it is advisable for an accompanying adult to be present for the student's reassurance and the protection of the medical staff.
- **3.3 Change Room Supervision:**
 - Supervision extends to change rooms, balancing student protection with privacy.
 - Supervisors must be the same gender as the change room users, except in an emergency where a student's safety is at risk.
 - Supervisors must announce their presence before entering and ensure supervision is discreet.
- **3.4 Tours:**
 - Prior to the tour, parents must be informed of all arrangements, including code of conduct and disciplinary actions and have signed a consent form.
 - Parents need to be informed before the event, that if a staff member, in consultation with a team manager, or tour leader, believes that there are grounds for concern about the safety of students and/or staff, that the ISA staff may take whatever action they deem appropriate to ensure the safety of the students and staff. This may include searches of rooms and bags, with or without students present. Depending on the nature of the concern police may be contacted.
 - Students in teams should always have access to the Participating Staff. The overriding principle remains "to act in the best interests of the child". Where the wellbeing or safety of a child appears to be at risk or if the child expresses discomfort, unease, the child should be removed from the situation immediately.
 - Consent forms and medical information forms should be completed by parents or caregivers of students and held by the team manager while on tour. If a student requires medical attention, a staff member will accompany the student.
 - Students should be reminded of their obligations as guests at hotels, schools or other accommodations and, at the same time, provided with information on things that may go wrong and strategies for keeping themselves safe.
 - Where toilets/showers/laundry facilities are away from sleeping areas, students will be instructed to attend in pairs.
 - Mixed gender sharing of rooms is not permitted.
 - Staff are to avoid being alone with a student unless it is an emergency where the student is in danger.

4) Participation, Information, and Equity

The ISA encourages children's participation in safety decisions, keeps families informed, and addresses diversity.

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- **4.1 Children's Participation:** Students are empowered to express their views on safety and are taken seriously. Age-appropriate information about rights and safety strategies is provided (e.g., pre-tour briefings, access to staff).
- **4.2 Families and Communities:** Parents/Caregivers will be fully informed, in writing, of all arrangements (training, match times, transport, supervision) and the ISA's Child Safe Policy and Code of Conduct. Two-way communication is encouraged, and feedback on safety policies is welcomed.
- **4.3 Equity and Diversity:** The ISA upholds equity and actively responds to the diverse circumstances and potential vulnerabilities of all children. Attention will be paid to the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, children with disability, and children from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds to ensure all have equal access to information, support, and complaints processes.

5) Reporting and Complaints

The ISA maintains clear, child-focused processes for responding to complaints and is committed to staff training.

- **5.1 Recognizing and Defining Child Abuse:** To meet reporting obligations, Participating Staff must be attuned to the definitions and indicators of harm (Sexual Abuse, Physical Abuse, Serious Neglect, Emotional/Psychological Abuse) as detailed in the ISA Code of Conduct.
- **5.2 Internal Reporting Pathway:**
 - **Designated Child Safety Officer (CSO):** For all ISA events and teams is the Convenor, Rep Convenor or ISA Director of Sport.
 - **Procedure:** Any Participating Staff member who forms a suspicion on reasonable grounds that a child is at risk of significant harm or receives a disclosure/complaint of abuse, must immediately report the matter to the designated CSO.
- **5.3 Mandatory External Reporting & NSW Obligations:**
 - **Legal Obligation:** All Participating Staff must comply with their personal legal obligations under the *Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Act 1998 (NSW)* and the NSW Reportable Conduct Scheme established under the *Children's Guardian Act 2019 (NSW)*.
 - **Immediate Notification (Criminal):** If a matter involves a criminal offence (e.g., sexual assault, serious physical assault), the matter must be reported immediately to the NSW Police Force (000 in an emergency or 131 444).
 - **Mandatory Reporting:** If a staff member forms a reasonable suspicion that a child is at risk of significant harm, the designated CSO will ensure a report is made to the NSW Department of Communities and Justice (DCJ) Child Protection Helpline (132 111).
 - **Reportable Conduct:** Allegations of reportable conduct against any ISA staff member/official must be referred by the CSO to the Office of the Children's Guardian (OCG).

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- **Oversight Requirement:** The ISA CSO will seek written confirmation from the relevant Member School that any required external reports (Police, DCJ, or OCG) have been completed within 24 hours. The CSO must file the report directly if confirmation is not received.
- **5.4 Child-Focused Complaint Handling:** All complaints will be handled promptly, taken seriously, and with the child's best interests as the primary consideration.
- **5.5 Education and Training:** All ISA Staff / ISA Officials must complete induction and ongoing, relevant child safe training provided by their member school, covering recognition of abuse indicators and reporting procedures.
- **5.6 Responding to a Disclosure: Immediate Protocol:**
 - **Protocol:** Staff must stop the current activity, listen carefully without interrupting, reassure the child, do not investigate or promise confidentiality (explain you must share for safety), and accurately record the information using the child's own words.
 - **Protection of Child:** Where an allegation is made against a staff member, the ISA must take immediate steps to protect the child. This involves the CSO managing the risk by preventing contact, which may include supervising or temporarily suspending the alleged offender pending investigation.
 - **Responding to Barriers:** Staff must be sensitive to barriers (CALD, disability) and consult the CSO to arrange appropriate communication support.

6) Child Safe Risk Management and Review

- **6.1 Risk Management Plan:** The ISA maintains a Child Safe Risk Management Plan that systematically identifies risks (e.g., physical environment, staff conduct, reporting failure) and establishes controls (e.g., Rule of Two, mandatory WWCC, supervision ratios) to eliminate or minimise the residual risk of harm, neglect, or exploitation.
- **6.2 Risk Tolerance:** The ISA's tolerance for residual risk related to child abuse, neglect, or exploitation is **ZERO tolerance** for any risk rated as High or Medium.
- **6.3 Review and Evaluation:** The ISA Child Safe Policy and Risk Management Plan must be reviewed annually by the ISA Board and immediately following any critical child safety incident or legislative change. Feedback will be gathered from children, families, and staff for continuous improvement.

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